

Message Text

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S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 ROME 3716

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IT

SUBJECT: DC MOVES TOWARD CRUCIAL NATIONAL CONGRESS

SUMMARY: FORLANI AND ZACCAGNINI REMAIN PRIME CONTENDERS FOR DC LEADERSHIP. REGIONAL CONGRESSES HELD THUS FAR APPEAR TO GIVE ZACCAGNINI AN EDGE, ALTHOUGH UNCERTAINTY REGARDING ORIENTATION OF SOME REGIONAL DELEGATE LISTS AND MODE OF SELECTION OF NEW SECRETARY MAKE PREDICTION OF WINNER IMPOSSIBLE. OUTCOME OF NATIONAL CONGRESS WILL DETERMINE DC CHANCES OF REGAINING POLITICAL INITIATIVE. CHOICE OF SECRETARY, METHOD OF HIS ELECTION (BY CONGRESS OR BY OLD GUARD DOMINATED NATIONAL COUNCIL), AND COMPOSITION OF MAJORITY WHICH HE COMMANDS ARE OF CRITICAL IMPORTANCE. EMBASSY BELIEVES DIRECT ELECTION OF FORLANI BY CONGRESS WOULD GIVE BEST CHANCE FOR DC GENERATIONAL CHANGE AND CONTINUATION OF REASONABLY FIRM ANTI-COMMUNIST LINE. WE BELIEVE IT WOULD BE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE OPENLY TO SUPPORT FORLANI'S ELECTION. INSTEAD, EMBASSY BELIEVES WE SHOULD CONTINUE TO IMPRESS ON OUR DC CONTACTS AT ALL LEVELS THAT US STRONGLY FAVORS DC RENEWAL AND HOPES THAT CONGRESS WILL PRODUCE EFFECTIVE UNITY AROUND COHERENT AND ELECTORALLY CONVINCING POLICY LINE. IN ADDITION, WE INTEND TO REITERATE OUR HOPE THAT DC WILL MAINTAIN A FIRM STAND AGAINST COMMUNIST PARTY ENTRY INTO GOVERNING MAJORITY AT NATIONAL LEVEL. END SUMMARY.

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1. CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS OVER WEEKEND HELD PARTY CONGRESSES

IN 15 REGIONS TO SELECT DELEGATES TO CRUCIAL NATIONAL CONGRESS NOW SCHEDULED TO OPEN MARCH 19 IN ROME. TWO REGIONAL CONGRESSES HAD BEEN HELD EARLIER (MARCHE AND VALLE D'AOSTA) AND REMAINING THREE WILL TAKE PLACE NEXT WEEKEND (CAMPAGNA, SARDEGNA AND PIEMONTE).

2. OUTCOME OF DC NATIONAL CONGRESS WILL BE DETERMINED BY ORIENTATION OF DELEGATES SELECTED. CONGRESS OF GREATEST IMPORTANCE AS IT REPRESENTS VIRTUALLY LAST CHANCE FOR PARTY TO PUT ITS HOUSE IN ORDER BEFORE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS SCHEDULED FOR NEXT SPRING, BUT WHICH MAY OCCUR BEFORE THAT DATE. MAIN ISSUE AT CONGRESS WILL BE SELECTION OF PARTY SECRETARY, WITH DC RENEWAL AND POLICY ON KEY ISSUES SUCH AS DC-COMMUNIST RELATIONS TO BE DETERMINED BY METHOD OF ELECTION AND BY POLITICAL BALANCE WITHIN MAJORITY WHICH CHOOSES SECRETARY. UNDER EXISTING DC STATUTES, CONGRESS SELECTS NATIONAL COUNCIL WHICH IN TURN CHOOSES NEW SECRETARY. HOWEVER, PRESSURE IS BUILDING AMONG RANK-AND-FILE DC PARLIAMENTARIANS TO HAVE CONGRESS CHANGE PARTY STATUTES TO PERMIT DIRECT ELECTION OF SECRETARY BY CONGRESS ITSELF.

3. ISSUE OF HOW SECRETARY WILL BE ELECTED IS ALMOST AS IMPORTANT AS SELECTION OF CANDIDATE. IF CONGRESS SUCCEEDS IN CHANGING STATUTES TO PERMIT DIRECT ELECTION FROM FLOOR, POWER OF TRADITIONAL FACTION LEADERS WOULD BE SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCED. IN ADDITION, BANDWAGON EFFECT MIGHT SET IN PERMITTING "REFORMERS" TO PUSH THROUGH OTHER STATUTORY MODIFICATIONS LIMITING TIME IN OFFICE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS AND GOVERNMENT LEADERS. IF STATUTES NOT CHANGED BY CONGRESS, CHOICE OF NEW SECRETARY AND OTHER MAJOR REFORM ISSUES WOULD HAVE TO BE DECIDED BY NATIONAL COUNCIL WHERE OLD GUARD WOULD PROBABLY STILL CALL THE SHOTS. DIRECT ELECTION OF SECRETARY BY CONGRESS WOULD FAVOR FORLANI, WHOSE CLOSEST SUPPORTERS ARE PUSHING THIS INNOVATION DESPITE RESISTANCE BY MANY IN ZACCAGNINI CAMP.

4. PLETHORA OF LOCAL DELEGATE LISTS MAKES IT IMPOSSIBLE TO DETERMINE ACTUAL STRENGTHS OF FORCES BACKING THE PRINCIPAL CONTENDERS: ZACCAGNINI AND FORLANI. HOWEVER, ZACCAGNINI MADE STRONG SHOWING IN A NUMBER OF KEY AREAS INCLUDING LOMBARDY, EMILIA, PUGLIA, LIGURIA, CALABRIA AND, MOST SIG-

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NIFICANTLY, IN THE DC VENETO STRONGHOLD PREVIOUSLY DOMINATED BY THE CENTRIST "DOROTEO" FORCES.

5. ZACCAGNINI BACKERS ANNOUNCED THAT THEIR MAN HAD REACHED 54 PERCENT TOTAL SUFFICIENT TO BRING INTO PLAY MAJORITY "PREMIUM" AND THUS INSURE CONTROL OF TWO-THIRDS OF SEATS ON DC NATIONAL COUNCIL. PICCOLI-BISAGLIA (DOROTEO) FORCES ISSUED THEIR OWN SET OF STATISTICS SHOWING THAT PRO-FORLANI WING OF

PARTY HAD GAINED 49.4 PERCENT OF REGIONAL CONGRESSVOTES TO 48.76 PERCENT FOR ZACCAGNINI AND 1.84 PERCENT UNDECIDED. EMBASSY JUDGMENT IS THAT ZACCAGNINI NOW COMMANDS NARROW MAJORITY WITHIN PARTY, ALTHOUGH HIS RE-ELECTION AS DC SECRETARY IS BY NO MEANS ASSURED. THESE STATISTICAL ESTIMATES HARE BASED ON THE COMMITMENT OF FACTIONAL GROUPS TO ONE OR THE OTHER OF THE CANDIDATES. SHOULD THE SECRETARY BE ELECTED DIRECTLY BY THE CONGRESS, THE FACTIONAL GROUPS WOULD BE FAR LESS DISCIPLINED AND THE RESULT LESS CLEAR.

6. ZACCAGNINI FORCES COMPROMISE HETEROGENEOUS ALLIANCE OF DC LEFT-WING FACTIONS (BASE AND FORZE NUOVE) WITH MORO FOLLOWERS AND SUPPORTERS OF FONMIN RUMOR AND PUBLIC WORKS MIN GULLOTTI PLUS MOST OF COLOMBO WING OF FORMER ANDREOTTI-COLOMBO FACTION. RUMOR-GULLOTTI AND COLOMBO GROUPS INCLUDE DISSIDENT CENTRISTS LIKE ANTONIOZZI AND VINCENZO RUSSO WITH LITTLE OR NOTHING IN COMMON WITH PARTY LEFT WING AS WELL AS OLD GUARD LEADERS LIKE TAVIANI WHO ONLY IN RECENT YEARS HAS MOVED SHARPLY LEFTWARDS. COLOMBO FACTION ALSO INCLUDES SOME SECOND LEVEL NATIONAL LEADERS (E.G., LATTANZIO) WHO HAVE ALREADY MADE CLEAR THEIR PREFERENCE FOR FORLANI.

7. PRO-FORLANI GROUPING IS ONLY SLIGHTLY MORE COMPACT, AND INCLUDES UNSTABLE MIXTURE OF OLD GUARD LEADERS SEEKING TO HOLD ONTO THEIR SEATS AND ATTRACTIVE "YOUNG TURKS" ANXIOUS THAT THEY NOT BE ALLOWED TO DO SO. FORLANI SUPPORTERS NOW COMPRISE PICCOLI-BISIGLIA (DOROTEO) FACTION, FANFANI AND FORLANI GROUPS, AND ANDREOTTI SUPPORTERS. AMONG MORE ATTRACTIVE PRO-FORLANI ELEMENTS ARE YOUNGER MINISTERS AND UNDERSECRETARIES LIKE ORLANDO, DAL FALCO, RADI AND ZAMBERLETTI. THESE RELATIVELY YOUNG "TURKS" ARE NOT SO MUCH ANTI-ZACCAGNINI AS PRO-FORLANI, SINCE THEY SEE THE LATTER AS THE MOST RELIABLE LEADER OF A

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GENERATIONAL CHANGE WITHIN THE PARTY. SHOULD FORLANI AGREE TO SUPPORT ZACCAGNINI AT THE CONGRESS IN ORDER TO PRESERVE DC UNITY, THEY WOULD PROBABLY GO ALONG.

8. AS EMBASSY SOURCES CLOSE TO FORLANI HAVE POINTED OUT PUBLICLY, FORLANI HAS NO BURNING DESIRE TO TAKE ON BURDEN OF DC SECRETARYSHIP. IN ADDITION, HE APPEARS VERY ANXIOUS TO AVOID A PARALYZING 50-50 SPLIT AT PARTY CONGRESS WHICH WOULD PRECLUDE ANY HOPE OF EFFECTIVE PARTY RENEWAL. WE BELIEVE HE WOULD BE INCLINED TO THROW HIS SUPPORT TO ZACCAGNINI IF HE FELT HE HIMSELF COULD NOT GAIN A BROAD MAJORITY AND IF A NEW ZACCAGNINI SECRETARIAT GAVE MORE WEIGHT TO THE VIEWS OF THE FORLANI WING. (NOTE: HE MIGHT ALSO BE WILLING TO SUPPORT A COMPROMISE CHOICE OF MORO AS SECRETARY IN ORDER TO PREVENT SHARP RIGHT-LEFT DIVISION IN PARTY. SEVERAL EMBASSY SOURCES HAVE ALREADY PREDICTED EMERGENCE OF MORO AS HIGH PRESTIGE CANDIDATE TO MEDIATE INTRA-PARTY CONFLICTS.)

9. THE VIEWS OF ZACCAGNINI AND FORLANI HAVE BEEN REPORTED AT LENGTH IN PREVIOUS MESSAGES (INCL. ROME 3433 AND 2581). FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW, THE OPTIMUM OUTCOME OF THE FORTHCOMING DC CONGRESS WOULD BE THE DIRECT ELECTION OF FORLANI FROM THE FLOOR BY A BROAD MAJORITY OF THE CONGRESSDELEGATES. IN THE EMBASSY'S VIEW, FORLANI REPRESENTS THE BEST THE DC "THIRD GENERATION" HAS TO OFFER IN TERMS OF A POSITIVE, REALISTIC, BUT FIRM COMMITMENT TO KEEP THE COMMUNIST PARTY OUT OF THE
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GOVERNING MAJORITY AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL AS LONG AS POSSIBLE AND A FAVORABLE ATTITUDE TOWARD GENERATIONAL CHANGE WITHIN THE PARTY. HE HAS ALSO MADE CLEAR HIS BELIEF THAT THE DC SEEK A DURABLE ACCORD WITH THE SOCIALIST PARTY IN ORDER TO GUARANTEE A GOVERNING MAJORITY NOT REQUIRING PCI PARTICIPATION.

10. WHILE FORLANI REPRESENTS OUR "FIRST CHOICE" AS DC SECRETARY, WE MUST REALIZE THAT WE MAY HAVE TO CONTINUE TO DEAL WITH ZACCAGNINI. THIS NEED NOT NECESSARILY BE AN UNLIVABLE SITUATION, PROVIDED HE IS EFFECTIVELY CONDITIONED BY A WIDE MAJORITY WITHIN THE PARTY. FOR THIS REASON, IT APPEARS CLEARLY IN OUR INTEREST THAT DC CONGRESS ELECT A SECRETARY WITH AS LARGE A MAJORITY AS POSSIBLE AND THAT IT NOT PRESENT NATION WITH SAME SPECTACLE OF FRATRICIDAL STRIFE AND RUDDERLESS DRIFT IN PARTY POLICY WHICH ACCOMPANIED DEFENESTRATION OF FANFANI LAST SUMMER.

11. OUR POLICY OPTIONS IN TRYING TO INFLUENCE OUTCOME OF DC CONCLAVE ARE EXTREMELY LIMITED. EMBASSY STRONGLY BELIEVES IT WOULD BE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE FOR US OPENLY TO ATTEMPT TO BACK FORLANI AS DC SECRETARY. PRESENT ANTI-AMERICAN ATMOSPHERE VIRTUALLY GUARANTEES THAT LEFTIST PRESS AND ANTI-FORLANI ELEMENTS WITHIN DC PARTY ITSELF WOULD QUICKLY SPOTLIGHT SUCH AN EFFORT AND PERHAPS USE IT TO CONFIRM SPECULATION THAT FORLANI WAS INVOLVED WITH THE CIA WHEN HE WAS PARTY SECRETARY IN 1972. IN ADDITION, FACT OF FORLANI'S WELL-KNOWN CLOSE ASSOCIATION WITH CAMILLO CROCIANI, WHO IS IMPLICATED IN LOCKHEED SCANDAL, MAY ALSO BE USED TO DISCREDIT HIM AS CORRUPTED AND AS AN AMERICAN-CHOSEN INSTRUMENT.

12. RATHER THAN TAKING SIDES IN LEADERSHIP RACE, WE INTEND TO CONTINUE TO MAKE CLEAR IN CONVERSATIONS WITH DC LEADERS OUR CONVICTION THAT CONGRESS REPRESENTS THE LAST CHANCE FOR DC TO RECAPTURE POLITICAL INITIATIVE. WE WILL, AS WE HAVE BEEN DOING FOR SOME MONTHS, OPENLY EXPRESS OUR EXPECTATIONS THAT THE CONGRESS PRODUCE TANGIBLE EVIDENCE OF DC "RENEWAL" AND "REJUVENATION". WE WILL VOICE OUR HOPE THAT THEI CONGRESS RESULT IN A NEW UNITY BASED ON A COMMITMENT TO PARTY RENEWAL. WHILE MAKING CLEAR THAT WE ARE NOT SEEKING TO BACK ANY INDIVIDUAL, WE WILL REITERATE OUR BELIEF THAT THE PRESERVATION OF A DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT IN ITALY DEPENDS ON DC CAPACITY TO
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CREATE A COHERENT AND ELECTORALLY ATTRACTIVE POLICY LINE BACKED BY AN EFFECTIVE MAJORITY WITHIN THE PARTY. WE MUST LEAVE THEM IN NO DOUBT THAT WE EXPECT THIS POLICY LINE TO CONTAIN A FIRM COMMITMENT TO KEEP THE COMMUNIST PARTY OUT OF THE GOVERNING MAJORITY.

13. OBVIOUSLY, WE WILL BE FOLLOWING THE SITUATION VERY CLOSELY AND INTEND TO BE AS ACTIVE AS POSSIBLE. THE DC POLITICAL SWAMP PROMISES TO BECOME STICKIER AND DEEPER THAN EVER DURING THE NEXT TWO WEEKS. HOWEVER, WE WILL BE ALERT TO EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO EXERCISE A POSITIVE INFLUENCE AND WE WILL ESPECIALLY WANT TO ASSURE THAT THE "YOUNG TURK" UNDERSTAND OUR POLITICAL MESSAGE. ALTHOUGH WE CANNOT GIVE THE IMPRESSION OF TRYING TO TORPEDO THE "OLD GUARD", WE MUST NOT BE CONSIDERED AS PART OF THEIR DEFENSE. VOLPE

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